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South Carolina Forestry Commission

Strategic Plan



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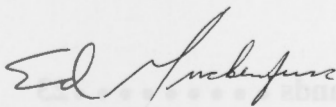
April 23, 1999

To Forestry Commission Employees and Members of the
Forestry Community:

The Strategic Plan is the product of considerable planning, input, and thoughtful review by many people. To arrive at consensus in charting the future of an agency with the diversity of services of the Forestry Commission is not an easy task. I commend the Commissioners and the Forestry Commission staff charged with facilitating the production of the Strategic Plan for their cooperation and the results of their work.

I believe this will be a valuable plan — one that Commissioners and agency personnel should use to guide their budgets, plans, and actions during the coming years. It is intended to be a living document, to be amended and updated as needs dictate. As you page through the text that follows, you will notice that many actions are already underway and some have been completed. That, I believe, is evidence of the plan's viability and the seriousness of our intent to be guided by the document.

If you were a participant in the process, thank you for your contribution. If you are reading it now for the first time, thank you for your attention. Together we will begin working toward turning the plan into reality.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ed Muckenfuss', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ed Muckenfuss
Chairman, South Carolina Forestry Commission

The Process

The Forestry Commission's Strategic Plan is the result of a five-step process initiated in the summer of 1997. Steps included collecting input, analyzing and verifying content, consolidating like issues, identifying strategies related to each issue, and developing a final report.

Input for the plan was collected through several independent processes designed to gather ideas from all stakeholders. Sessions were first held with agency employees to gather their concerns about internal obstacles that limit their ability to deliver quality customer service and to discover their ideas about agency program direction and development. This was followed by four public forums held across the state to collect ideas from landowners, agency partners, and the forestry community. Participants were given the opportunity to review and comment on the final draft of the plan. Additionally, the agency gained insight through participation in the Malcolm Baldrige Self Assessment.

Suggestions from all of these sources were then assigned to committees formed within existing program areas to complete steps two, three, and four of the process. Each committee reviewed suggestions, consolidated similar suggestions into issue statements, and developed action items to address each issue.

In final stage of the process, input from the Forestry Commissioners' Long Range Planning Committee was merged with the plan developed from employee and stakeholder input.

Mission

OUR MISSION – To protect, promote, enhance, and nurture the forest lands of South Carolina and educate the public about forestry issues in a manner consistent with achieving the greatest good for its citizens.

The Commission shall serve as an advocate for forestry through public educational programs on the environmental, economic, and multiple-use benefits of forest management.

The Commission will utilize Total Quality Management concepts in meeting its responsibilities.

Responsibilities extend to all forest lands, both rural and urban, and to all associated forest values and amenities including, but not limited to, timber, wildlife, water quality, air quality, soil protection, recreation, and aesthetics.

The Forestry Commission shall have general and specific responsibilities for the promulgation and enforcement of laws and regulations related to protection of the forest and its associated values.

The Commission shall be responsible for promoting and developing the appropriate technologies to accomplish its objectives, and for the development and promulgation of Best Management Practice Guidelines for South Carolina's forest land.

Enhance the Resource

An ample, productive forest land base and an economic climate conducive to forestry-based business are essential if forest landowners of South Carolina are to practice sustainable forest management.

Goal 1: The SCFC will serve as a catalyst for promotion, development and expansion of the forest resource and forestry-related industry in the state.

Action 1. Cooperate with the SC Department of Commerce in the promotion of forestry-based businesses in South Carolina.

Action 2. Provide leadership in the identification, recruitment, and development of secondary forest industry and appropriate primary industry.

Action 3. Expand delivery of forestry-related Rural Development programs in cooperation with other agencies/entities.

Action 4. Maintain a fair and equitable tax system to encourage management of forest lands for products and forest-related amenities.

Goal 2: The SCFC will improve contacts and communication with state and local levels of government concerning forestry-related issues.

Action 1. Encourage active participation in forestry issues at all organizational levels.

Action 2. Incorporate participation in the development of county comprehensive plans into performance appraisal goals of area-level personnel.

Action 3. State Forester to initiate development of an annual agency resource summit to foster a productive working relationship among natural resource management entities.

Action 4. Increase participation in public hearings of various agencies, including but not limited to watershed project meetings, at the area level.

Action 5. Develop brief timely newsletters describing ongoing activities, targeting legislative staff and the Governor's office staff as the audience.

Action 6. Plan an annual field trip for legislative staff and the Governor's office staff, focusing on services provided to the small private landowner.

Action 7. Invite the legislative staff to participate in high profile forestry events.

Action 8. Address regulatory and liability issues associated with forest management practices such as prescribed burning, use of pesticides, and harvest cutting.

Action 9. Require active participation by local foresters in landowner associations.

Goal 3. Provide policy makers, industry, and environmental groups accurate and timely information on the state's forest inventory and health of the forest.

Action 1. Maintain funds and personnel to measure 20 percent of Southern Annual Forest Inventory System (SAFIS) plots annually.

Action 2. Survey adequate forest samples to ascertain a picture of forest health.

Action 3. Increase emphasis on training Forestry Commission personnel and cooperators in the Incident Command System (ICS) and general wildfire suppression tactics.

Action 4. Implement low-impact suppression techniques where applicable.

Protect the Resource

To ensure their future health, South Carolina's forests must be protected from harm due to natural and human-caused factors.

Goal 1. The SCFC will evaluate fire protection strategies and priorities as urban development into forested areas creates additional hazards.

Action 1. Dispatch system software, equipment, and staffing will be updated to perform to expectations.

Action 2. Redefine and strengthen the cooperative relationship with local fire departments and forest industry cooperators as urban developments expand into forested areas.

Action 3. Increase emphasis on training Forestry Commission personnel and cooperators in the Incident Command System (ICS) and general wildfire suppression tactics.

Action 4. Implement low-impact suppression techniques where applicable.

Action 5. Establish a statewide committee to develop fire equipment standards for the Forestry Commission's Fire Program.

Action 6. Purchase a computer software program to track the operation and maintenance of fire equipment.

Goal 2. The SCFC will increase law enforcement services in wildfire and timber transaction arenas.

Action 1. Review agency-required training for law enforcement officers.

Action 2. Provide training on timber theft for all agency law enforcement officers, foresters, technicians, and cooperators.

Action 3. Improve contact and communication with local law enforcement officials.

Action 4. Develop and enforce standardized operating procedures for field investigation and prosecution.

Action 5. Provide law enforcement officers with appropriate personal protection investigative equipment.

Action 6. Review law enforcement officer staffing levels and adjust accordingly.

Goal 3. The SCFC will re-evaluate programs to ensure prompt response to insect and disease outbreaks and concerns.

Action 1. Provide training to agency foresters, technicians, and cooperators on survey techniques, identification and control of forest pests.

Action 2. Maintain continuous monitoring of forest insect and disease activity.

Action 3. Provide detailed field or lab evaluation of specific forest pest problems for use by land managers.

Action 4. Evaluate section staffing so that personnel and resources are available to combat forest pest problems on a timely basis and as required by state law.

Goal 4. The SCFC will evaluate programs to ensure protection of environmental functions, including air and water quality.

Action 1. Update cooperative agreements with state and federal regulatory agencies, forest industry, and private organizations to protect environmental functions, including air and water quality.

Action 2. Review and update smoke management guidelines to maintain air quality standards while promoting the responsible use of prescribed burning.

Action 3. Review and update Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines to better protect water quality.

Action 4. Provide BMP training for non-industrial private landowners, industry, other state and federal agencies.

Goal 5. Increase contractor recognition of, and compliance with, BMPs.

Action 1. Update sample contracts provided by SCFC to include BMP compliance.

Action 2. Require contractors to include BMP compliance statements in their contracts in order to be included on “Recommended Contractor List”.

Action 3. Work with SCFA, Consulting Foresters Association, etc., to encourage landowners, loggers, foresters, and contractors to request courtesy BMP examinations.

Action 4. Continue BMP monitoring to document success and provide opportunities for education of landowners, loggers, and forestry professionals.

Manage the Resource

Forest landowners, communities, and the public expect the South Carolina Forestry Commission to deliver financial and technical assistance while addressing social and environmental concerns.

Goal 1. Provide improved land management services to landowners of South Carolina by being more responsive to the needs of our customers.

Action 1. Develop surveys of landowners to determine what services are needed. Services developed should not compete with private consulting foresters or industry cooperative management programs, but rather advise landowners as to what needs to be done and who they could contact.

Action 2. Identify our customers' needs. Expand forest management services that the SCFC can reasonably provide to landowners to improve timber production, aid in efficient utilization of the timber resource, foster conservation and multiple use of the forest resource, and manage and maintain healthy urban forests.

Action 3. Perform internal study of current services provided by SCFC. Solicit input from employees on how services can be better performed.

Action 4. Provide technical forest management assistance to state and local entities who own forest land.

Goal 2. The SCFC will administer federal and state cost-share reforestation programs and provide technical forest management assistance designed to meet landowners' goals.

Action 1. Seek opportunities to work with federal agencies to streamline the application and payment process among the many cost-share programs.

Action 2. Examine regulations and liability issues concerning prescribed burning and seek solutions that will provide for public safety while permitting prescribed burning.

Action 3. Develop special management strategies applicable to landowners with small tracts and utilize the Stewardship program to serve landowners with objectives other than timber production. Encourage foresters to pursue specialties such as wildlife, water quality, and recreation, as well as traditional forest management.

Action 4. Improve utilization of trained forest technicians. Examine basic forest management services and assign appropriate services to forest technicians.

Action 5. Provide special services, for a fee, that are not adequately provided by the private sector, such as prescribed burning, firebreak plowing, and water bar construction.

Goal 3. The SCFC will provide technical assistance and financial grants in urban and community forestry to local governments, non-profit organizations, other agencies, and individuals.

Action 1. Re-examine the process for advertising availability of urban forestry grant funds to stimulate increased interest and ensure that the program is reaching appropriate organizations.

Action 2. Require all agency foresters to become active in community forestry projects in their assigned areas to facilitate exchange of information between the traditional forestry community and local government staff.

Action 3. Assist with certain urban functions and focus educational messages to this influential group.

Goal 4. The SCFC will use its landholdings to demonstrate innovative forest management techniques as well as for in-house training and applied research.

Action 1. Seek partnerships with educational institutions and forest industry to create projects demonstrating the latest forest management techniques. Use them to train agency personnel and to inform the public.

Goal 5. Provide landowners with optimum quality forest tree seedlings to meet needs not filled by the private sector.

Action 1. Continue 3rd generation improvement for loblolly pine production.

Action 2. Maintain membership in tree improvement and nursery improvement cooperative programs.

Raise Awareness About the Resource

***T**here is a lack of understanding among decision-makers and the public in general concerning the environmental and economic benefits of sound forest management.*

Goal 1. The SCFC will develop and promote environmental education programs for all audiences.

Action 1. Continue to develop Harbison State Forest as an environmental education facility and expand programs to selected field locations.

Action 2. Expand and promote environmental education programs such as Project Learning Tree and Teaching KATE (Kids About The Environment).

Action 3. Continue annual teacher's tour and development of forestry educational material for distribution to schools.

Action 4. Focus educational messages in urban areas.

Goal 2. The SCFC will enhance its image as an initial source for forest management assistance in South Carolina.

Action 1. Develop a pro-active approach to reaching landowners through unsolicited contacts, civic involvement, group meetings, and other opportunities.

Action 2. Explore diverse methods for marketing the agency's programs and promoting services to new audiences.

Action 3. Create a website on the Internet with numerous links and keywords to ensure display on many searches.

Goal 3. The SCFC will utilize current and available media to reach targeted audiences with relevant forestry information.

Action 1. Research potential audiences to develop targeted information and/or education campaigns.

Action 2. Develop audio-visual, print, and exhibit material, promoting sustainable forestry, for use by agency personnel in their communities. Encourage use of these items through the assignment of goals.

Prepare to Meet Future Demands

Goal 4. The SCFC will significantly increase interaction, cooperation, and communication with other state agencies, local governments, forestry organizations, universities, professional societies, environmental and conservation groups.

Action 1. Work with the South Carolina Forestry Association (SCFA), American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF), and Clemson University to establish a common message and develop priorities and audiences.

Action 2. Develop effective methods for delivering forestry information to legislators and governor.

Action 3. At the Region and Area levels improve contacts and communication with local governments.

Prepare to Meet Future Demands

To meet future demands and provide quality customer service, the South Carolina Forestry Commission must have well-trained, qualified staff that enjoy a safe and rewarding work environment.

Goal 1. The SCFC will develop internal training programs to prepare employees to utilize emerging technologies as means to improve customer services.

Action 1. Identify training needed through self-assessment process and employee planning conference report. Send key employees to outside training if necessary and utilize them as instructors for the balance of staff.

Action 2. Evaluate and adopt appropriate emerging technology (i.e. GIS, GPS, pesticides, forest fertilization, and intensive management) to improve the efficiency of SCFC personnel so that they may provide improved services to customers.

Goal 2. The SCFC will review staffing levels and organizational structure to ensure the agency is in a position to supply needed services.

Action 1. Internal Process Auditor will examine all primary services and generate data to facilitate decision-making to improve these services. Performance measures will be generated for each program area.

Action 2. Re-evaluate area forest management and forest protection reviews and utilize results to examine staffing level at area offices.

Action 3. To facilitate efficiency and improve employee morale, support changes in status of county forestry boards as recommended in Legislative Audit Council Report issued in August 1998.

Action 4. State Forester, Deputy State Forester, a Regional Forester, Division Chief, and a Commissioner will review staffing levels and organizational structure and issue an annual report to the Commission.

Goal 3. Develop internal training programs for agency personnel to efficiently, safely, and professionally provide better land management services.

Action 1. Encourage foresters to pursue various specialties as well as basic forest management.

Action 2. Implement annual technical training, course subjects determined by need. Focus on assisting/improving our existing program. Improve utilization of trained technicians.

Action 3. Ensure that all SCFC employees are aware of services provided by the agency.

Goal 4. Establish goals and implement plans to reduce the number of job-related injuries.

Action 1. Reduce Experience Modifier to 0.40 (current level is 0.79) by year 2000.

Action 2. Implement physical fitness standards based on job requirements.

Goal 5. Establish goals and implement vehicle and equipment operation safety training to reduce the number of accidents.

Action 1. Evaluate available programs. Implement programs that involve on-the-road, in-the-field practice rather than classroom instruction. Driver training should be offered to all employees.



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Goal 6. Continue the thrust of Total Quality Management.

Action 1. Expand training efforts below the management level.

Action 2. Expand the audience of *Fourth Generation Management* or other selected TQM training to Foresters, Rangers, Wardens, Technicians, and Support Staff.

Goal 7. Develop plans to enhance professional development of SCFC personnel.

Action 1. Expand internal and external training to promote personnel development.

Action 2. Identify reasons for employee turnover through exit interviews, and develop plans to reduce turnover rate.

Action 3. Follow up on exit interviews and develop a report evaluating the agency's turnover rate against industry and other government agencies.

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